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Evaluation

Annual report of the Administrator on evaluation in 2005*

Summary

The evaluation function in UNDP supports organizational learning, the effective management for results, and accountability. The year 2005 witnessed numerous collaborations throughout UNDP and with external partners in advancing the quality of the UNDP evaluation function in ways commensurate with increased recognition of its importance for organizational and development effectiveness. This report presents these activities and their potential effects in enhancing the quality of the evaluation function.

The report covers the period from March 2005 to February 2006, and describes the scope of coverage of evaluations of UNDP and its associated funds and programmes. It presents the major findings of evaluations, analyses the contribution of UNDP to selected development results, and highlights factors that affect success. The report outlines significant organizational issues and lessons on the relationship, and effect of UNDP resource mobilization strategies on the strength of its role as a neutral broker, and on the continuing challenges to complement its advocacy and policy dialogue work with greater 'downstream' relevance and effectiveness. The last part of the report presents a rolling agenda for the Evaluation Office programme of work for 2006-2007.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to take note of the report and its validation of the UNDP contribution to specific national development results and identification of key organizational lessons. The Board may wish to acknowledge the measures taken to improve the quality of the evaluation function, in particular the codification of an evaluation policy.

The Board may wish to recognize the progress in the conduct and use of evaluation during the year and commend UNDP for the considerable increase in the number of outcome evaluations conducted in comparison with 2004. In addition, the Board may wish to acknowledge that over the course of the year UNDP used evaluation as a basis for improving results-based management.

The Board may choose to approve the evaluation agenda for 2006-2007.

* The compilation of data required to present the Executive Board with the most current information has delayed submission of the present document.



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I. Performance of the evaluation function

A. Introduction

1. Evaluation serves to provide valid, reliable and useful information about the intended and unintended effects of UNDP interventions to enhance human development. That information is used for organizational learning, decision-making and accountability. The evaluation function of UNDP has the following primary responsibilities: to ensure that coverage of the evaluation of UNDP interventions is optimal in supporting organizational learning and accountability; to establish and employ evaluation standards; to enhance the utility of evaluative knowledge; to enhance the institutional capacity for evaluation, taking knowledge-sharing and the development of communities of practice into account; and to ensure that evaluations are conducted in an effective and efficient manner, guided by the United Nations reform and partnership agreements.

2. The evaluation offices of UNDP and its associated funds and programmes plan and conduct evaluations of country programmes and projects, regional cooperation programmes, and thematic and strategic goals of the organization. They also enhance the quality of the evaluation function, practice and use. They report on compliance in carrying out mandatory evaluations and in the use of evaluative knowledge.

3. The units responsible for programmes (bureaux and country offices) plan and manage outcome and project evaluations at global, regional and country levels. These evaluations generate lessons primarily for programme improvement, and programme units are responsible for implementing and making systematic use of the evaluation recommendations. Evaluations are also used to measure accountability of UNDP performance. In addition, they constitute building blocks for strategic evaluations, thereby contributing to corporate accountability.

4. Chapter I of the report addresses the evaluation function. Chapter II outlines the results achieved and not achieved as evident from evaluations conducted in 2005. Chapter III identifies the key organizational lessons. And Chapter IV provides the proposed programme of work for the Evaluation Office for 2006-2007.

B. Planning and coverage of evaluation

Evaluations conducted by the UNDP Evaluation Office

5. In support of decision-making at the corporate level, the Evaluation Office is responsible for planning and conducting corporate evaluations that inform on effectiveness, relevance and strategic positioning, and suggest future directions for UNDP in supporting development. The planning process involves consultations with key stakeholders on priority areas for decision-making, new programme development or direction-setting in the organization.

6. During 2005, the Evaluation Office conducted seven independent evaluations. The evaluations conducted made use of an extensive information base drawn from existing project and outcome evaluations, pertinent case studies, and other complementary surveys.

Strategic and thematic evaluations

7. *Evaluation of gender mainstreaming in UNDP.* Following a request from the Executive Board at its second regular session, 2002, this evaluation focused on UNDP performance and effectiveness in mainstreaming gender equality throughout the organization and its programmes.

8. *Evaluation of the role and contributions of UNDP in HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa and Ethiopia.* As mandated by the Executive Board, the evaluation assesses the contribution of UNDP to the global challenge of reducing HIV/AIDS mortality, drawing on ten country case studies.

Programmatic evaluations

9. The Executive Board has requested that all global and regional programmes be evaluated before a new programme is prepared and approved. The evaluation of the Global Cooperation Framework was conducted in 2004; and during 2005 the Evaluation Office conducted the first evaluation of a regional programme, the *evaluation of the regional cooperation framework for the Arab States, 2002-2005*.

10. The Evaluation Office completed four Assessments of Development Results (ADRs) focused on the effectiveness of the country programme and the UNDP contribution to national priorities. The countries selected – *Honduras, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen* – were identified for their potential to generate lessons of strategic relevance to the organization. These include UNDP's performance in a non-core resource environment, or in transition and reform contexts.

Evaluations conducted by the associated funds and programmes

11. In accordance with United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) mandatory requirements for mid-cycle and end-of-cycle evaluation, six centrally-managed evaluations of UNCDF projects were carried out in 2005, including five evaluations of local development programmes – four in least developed countries (LDCs) in Africa and one in an LDC in Asia – and an evaluation of UNCDF support to microfinance in West Africa. In addition, an independent evaluation of the UNDP microfinance portfolio, led by the Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest, assessed the role of UNCDF as policy advisor and technical advisor to UNDP for microfinance initiatives.

12. The evaluation unit of UNIFEM completed four thematic, multi-country evaluations during the year. In Africa they focused on conflict prevention and recovery, while in Asia they focused on income-generating initiatives. In the Pacific, the focus was on UNIFEM effectiveness in contributing to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

13. The evaluation unit of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme conducted six project evaluations in 2005, mostly addressing projects related to democratic governance. Four UNV evaluations covered African countries, one the Asia Pacific region and one Latin America.

Outcome and project evaluations managed by units responsible for programmes (decentralized evaluations)

14. UNDP has 142 country offices which plan and manage external evaluations¹. During 2005, 271 outcome and project evaluations were completed, a four per cent increase in total number over the previous year (see annex table 3). As in 2004, 40 per cent of country offices did not conduct a single evaluation during the year. Regionally, coverage reflected the pattern of the previous reporting period, the highest proportion (77 per cent) of evaluations having been conducted in the Asia and the Pacific region, and the lowest in the Africa region, where 53 per cent of all offices conducted at least one evaluation.

15. Amongst the 13 countries with programme cycles ending in 2005 – and thus subject to compliance – the pattern of the previous year also remained unchanged: just over one-third (38 per cent) completed the requisite number of outcome evaluations; another one-third (31 per cent) complied partially, having conducted at least one but not the requisite number; and the remaining one-third (31 per cent) conducted no outcome evaluations (see annex table 2). Project evaluations are not mandatory under UNDP requirements, but they may be required by partnership protocols, such as in the case of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and UNCDF. There are no precise data on compliance with the evaluation requirements of partnership protocols, but more than 20 GEF project evaluations were managed by country offices during 2005.

16. The conduct of outcome evaluations has increased dramatically during this reporting period. Sixty-nine outcome evaluations were conducted in 2005, an 86 per cent increase over 2004, which was itself a 70 per cent increase over 2003. By contrast, the total number of project evaluations decreased by 20 per cent in comparison with the previous year. That pattern suggests that country offices are giving greater emphasis to the conduct of outcome evaluations, which is a positive development in support of results-based management.

17. The increase in outcome evaluations is consistent across MYFF goals and commensurate with resource allocation. The great majority of outcome evaluations conducted during this reporting period have focused on MYFF goals 1 and 2, *achieving the MDGs and reducing human poverty* and *fostering democratic governance*, which are the top two in terms resource allocation. The evaluation findings in these areas are highlighted in Chapter II of the present report. The exception is Goal 4, *crisis prevention and recovery*, which decreased by 8 per cent compared to last year (see annex figure 1 and table 5). This is an area of growing engagement for UNDP, and it is important to understand what works and why.

18. The conduct of outcome evaluations is variable across and within regions. The highest proportion of outcome evaluations across regions is to be found in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and in Latin America and the Caribbean, with 40 per cent and 29 per cent of country offices conducting at least one outcome evaluation, respectively. The Africa region conducted the lowest with only 16 per cent, the Arab States 28 per cent and Asia and the Pacific 24 per cent (see annex figure 2 and table 6). However, although in comparing *across* regions Africa comes out lowest, 25 per cent of all evaluations (including projects) conducted *within* the region were at the outcome level. This compares with only

¹ Outcome evaluations are planned at the beginning of the country programme cycle, and are chosen to address priority areas and timed to feed programme improvement. Project evaluations are typically planned in accordance with partnership protocols, normally to assess mid- or end-term performance and impact.

21 per cent and 17 per cent respectively in the Arab States and in Asia and the Pacific. Africa seems to be more focused on outcomes than Asia and the Pacific or the Arab States. These variations may be explained by several factors related to sources of programme funding, budget allocation for evaluation, institutional arrangements and technical capacity.

C. Quality of evaluations

19. Evaluation informs the formulation and revision of policies, strategies and programmes, as well as for decision-making. It must therefore be objective, impartial, and valid.

20. *Quality of evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office.* The peer review of the UNDP evaluation function conducted under the auspices of the DAC Network on Evaluation concluded that the Evaluation Office produces evaluations that are independent, credible and useful. However, their potential for helping to strengthen accountability and performance assessment could be better exploited by the organization. The review highlighted a need for greater transparency in the benchmarks developed for judging effectiveness and impact. Further, it noted the importance of enhancing national ownership of evaluations as key to increasing their usefulness and impact for development.

21. *Quality of decentralized evaluations.* The evaluations produced by country offices, besides being used for programmatic improvement, are building-blocks for strategic, global, regional and country programme evaluations. The quality and utility of the evaluations commissioned by country offices is, however, uneven. Some present rigorous and credible assessments of UNDP performance. Others, while providing interesting strategic analysis, are lacking in terms of performance assessment and evaluative evidence.

22. Part of the problem comes from a lack of clarity in programme objectives and poorly defined performance indicators. In addition, it is difficult to attribute outcomes with activities or outputs that involve UNDP alone. Outcome evaluations are a partnership proposition by their nature and require a deep engagement with the major international and national stakeholders in a given country. However, this approach is not yet an established practice.

23. *Evaluation Office's actions to enhance quality.* The Evaluation Office is taking a number of actions to assure the quality of centrally managed and decentralized evaluations. Quality standards are being developed for each stage of the evaluation process, including the planning, conduct and use of evaluation. These will provide objective, transparent benchmarks against which quality can be checked, scored and ensured at each stage of the process. They will provide a horizon against which the Evaluation Office and the country office can identify and address capacity gaps and other challenges in order to meet the expected quality. The effectiveness of such efforts will be highly dependent on the existence of evaluation expertise at the country level.

D. Use of evaluation

24. Public attention on effective oversight within the United Nations system underscores the importance of effective use and follow-up in respect of evaluations. The Evaluation Office has sought to achieve this by structuring consultations with key internal and external stakeholders on the focus, timing and follow-up to evaluations in the context of the evaluation agenda. ADRs are now timed to match the country programme cycle. All evaluations, moreover, will be accompanied by a

management response. To ensure full corporate ownership of management responses and provide for more effective follow-up and implementation, senior management will review all responses to evaluations requested by the Executive Board prior to their submission. This will serve to brief other units on the nature of the issues and provide them with an opportunity to 'own' the proposed response and support its implementation as appropriate.

25. The evidence of use of evaluations has been drawn from programme units. Over the past year, programme evaluations have had an impact on restructuring existing strategies and designing new ones. The evaluation of the regional cooperation framework for the Arab States has been used to inform the new regional programme. In Ukraine and Turkey, UNDP has used conclusions from the ADRs to inform new country programme documents. In Jamaica, following the evaluation recommendation to rethink the UNDP role in middle-income countries, the country office has undertaken a consultative process for its strategic repositioning.

26. The response to strategic and thematic evaluations has been similarly positive. The evaluation of gender mainstreaming, for example, led to revision of the UNDP gender action plan for 2006-2007. Recommendations of the UNIFEM gender responsive budget programme evaluation have been taken into account in designing the logical framework of the second phase of the programme, while findings of the Peace and Security Programme evaluation have been used in identifying future strategic directions for UNIFEM in this area. Following up on a recommendation of the UNDP microfinance portfolio review, a new UNDP microfinance policy has been issued, making UNCDF the gatekeeper and quality assurer of UNDP microfinance programming. As of 2006, the rate of follow-up on agreed evaluation recommendations will be included as an indicator of organizational effectiveness in the UNCDF balanced scorecard.

27. To support this improved use within the organization, the Evaluation Office is finalizing a new electronic recommendation and follow-up tracking system for management responses. While the system will be managed by the Evaluation Office, programme units will be responsible for updating the information and ensuring that the management responses are implemented. To ensure oversight, the Evaluation Office will prepare periodic implementation status reports for UNDP senior management and the Executive Board.

E. Capacity development for evaluation

28. *Knowledge sharing and staff learning.* In enhancing the practice of evaluation in the institution, networking, knowledge-sharing and exchange are critical. The Evaluation Network (EvalNet) is the main platform for exchange among country offices. In 2005 there was a 31 per cent increase in membership, up to 855 members worldwide. Network members acknowledge the effectiveness of this community of practice in sharing evaluation knowledge and enhancing capacity. Moreover, an online roster of evaluation experts has been developed and is available for consultation by all UNDP offices.

29. *Development of communities of practice and learning groups among country offices.* Regional workshops conducted by the Evaluation Office in 2004 and 2005 resulted in an intensive exchange of knowledge and experience among country offices. For example, the Panama country office shared the knowledge and experience of its monitoring and evaluation unit with the Dominican Republic and Ecuador. In Africa, the HIV/AIDS unit from Kenya participated in a monitoring and evaluation reference and publication group that was instrumental in fostering

capacity-building in monitoring and evaluation for local partners in Somalia. In Eastern Europe, the HIV/AIDS focal point from Belarus was invited to Latvia to participate in the design of an outcome evaluation.

30. *Advisory and technical services and training.* The Evaluation Office has provided advisory and technical services to country offices and regional bureaux. In 2005, these services included assistance to country offices in supporting national monitoring and evaluation frameworks and to regional bureaux for outcome evaluation management. Evaluation Office staff members participated as resource persons in training sessions organized by the UNDP Learning Resource Centre for junior and national professional officers, deputy resident representatives and resident representatives.

31. *External partnerships for knowledge sharing.* In addressing development evaluation challenges in 2005, the Evaluation Office has continued to build on its professional partnerships. Examples include dialogue with the independent evaluation group of the World Bank on approaches and methodologies, and with the evaluation unit of the European Commission. In the Asia and the Pacific region, for the second year running, the Evaluation Office has supported the Tokyo Workshop on the evaluation of official development assistance hosted by the Government of Japan for government officials from more than twenty-five Asian countries. The Evaluation Office has also sponsored and participated in the annual conference of the Malaysian Evaluation Society. UNIFEM has been working in partnership with the African Evaluation Association to strengthen information management on gender- and rights-based monitoring and evaluation, including a database of gender and development evaluators, resource materials, and an electronic networking forum.

32. *Partner country evaluation capacity development.* Lessons from five regional workshops conducted by the Evaluation Office revealed that the relevance and utility of evaluation is increased when programme countries become real partners in the planning, conduct and use of evaluation. The Evaluation Office is now, under the aegis of UNEG, partnering with other United Nations organizations and the Government of South Africa in a country level evaluation. This experience will be used as an opportunity for mutual capacity enhancement as well as for developing lessons for alternative approaches to enhancing capacity development and national ownership of evaluations.

F. Enhancing the evaluation function

33. *Codification of an evaluation policy.* During 2005, the Evaluation Office worked to codify the evaluation function so as to define the framework and improve the efficiency of the system, as well as the quality and utility of the products. Development of the policy was consultative, and included input from across the organization through an informal session with Executive Board members and the DAC peer review panel. The policy defined norms, principles, and key concepts, as well as roles and responsibilities for the conduct and use of evaluation throughout the organization, and will be submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its annual session in June 2006.

34. *Peer review of the Evaluation Office by the DAC network on evaluation.* The evaluation function was the subject of a systematic peer review by the DAC network on evaluation. That external review provided information on the independence, credibility and utility of the evaluation function. The review, together with a

response from the Administrator, was presented at an informal meeting of the Executive Board, and the results have been used to finalize the draft policy.

35. *Collaboration with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).* The active involvement of the Evaluation Office in UNEG responds to the United Nations reform agenda of increased harmonization and efficiency, reduced transaction costs and the building of national ownership in conducting and leading evaluations. Among the main activities of the Evaluation Office have been: serving as Chair of UNEG; hosting and managing the secretariat; participating in task forces and groups designed to enhance the quality of the evaluation function through quality assessment, increase professionalism and capacity of evaluators by developing a competency profile for specialists and a training and learning curriculum, and explore the linkages between evaluation and results-based management.

G. Resources

36. *Evaluation Office capacity.* The Evaluation Office has 15 professional and three general service posts. The budget allocated from core resources for 2005 was \$2,500,000, and the budget delivery rate was 96 per cent.

37. *Capacity of the associated funds and programmes.* The UNIFEM evaluation unit has one part-time professional post, and UNCDF has one full-time professional post – reduced in 2005 from four posts (three professional and one general service). The UNV unit has four staff: three professionals and one general service. During 2005, all evaluation units collaborated closely, particularly in developing the draft evaluation policy.

38. *Capacity of country offices and regional bureaux.* There are diverse institutional arrangements for staffing and budgeting at the country level. Only 12 of the 142 country offices have a full-time, dedicated monitoring and evaluation professional, either specialist or advisor; while at least 122 have a focal point. With few exceptions, monitoring and evaluation focal points are not evaluation specialists, but administrators or managers, with multiple responsibilities. Monitoring and evaluation specialists in country offices have varying responsibilities depending on office priorities. These include communication with headquarters on evaluation-related matters; providing in-house assistance and training on programme design, monitoring and evaluation; and serving as evaluation task managers.

39. All regional bureaux have evaluation focal points to support evaluation planning and liaise with the country offices and with the Evaluation Office. One regional centre (Europe and the CIS) has a monitoring and evaluation specialist position, which was established with the support of the Evaluation Office. The specialist is responsible for building the capacity of country offices to monitor and evaluate programmes, and advising on the conduct of decentralized evaluations.

II. Results

40. This chapter presents evidence from evaluations completed during 2005, organized according to the corporate goals. Evidence is also provided on gender mainstreaming as one of the drivers of development effectiveness. The analysis draws upon four ADRs and three strategic evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office, on 32 outcome evaluations commissioned by Country Offices and conducted

by independent consultants, and on the evaluations conducted by evaluation units of associated funds and programmes.

A. Achieving the MDGs and reducing human poverty

Increasing national capacity for poverty monitoring and pro-poor policymaking

41. Evaluations analysed for this report reveal that UNDP initiatives are most relevant and valued when they focus on strengthening the technical capacity of public institutions to design, implement and monitor public policies effectively. In Armenia, UNDP has been key to the endorsement of the MDGs as national development priorities by the highest levels of Government, and in the establishment of a vulnerability and human poverty indicators tracking system. Consequently, the Ministry of Economy and European Integration launched and published the first MDG baseline report for the country, which is used to track progress in Government policies and programmes. Similarly, in Mongolia, UNDP was instrumental in the establishment of a poverty research group in the Ministry of Finance, which strengthened the capacity for policy formulation and monitoring in the area of poverty reduction.

42. Evaluations suggest that UNDP initiatives in this area are more likely to generate significant outcomes when technical and financial assistance is complemented by advocacy for the MDGs and human development. In Ukraine, for example, budget allocation for local governments is influenced by the tracking of a human development index, locally defined after the production and launch of national human reports in 2001 and 2003. The evaluation of the regional cooperation framework (RCF) for the Arab States, for example, shows that UNDP has been successful in raising the debate on a number of sensitive political issues in a region where external involvement in policymaking has been controversial and frequently rejected. The RCF served to analyse human development trends through the Arab Human Development Report and identify some of the constraints to development effectiveness in the region. Similarly, in Yemen, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) progress report, prepared with UNDP support, has been a notable contribution for the preparation of the new Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, which itself includes an action programme for achieving the MDGs and an analysis of costs.

Piloting and mainstreaming local development initiatives

43. The analysis across the evaluations indicates that the piloting of local development experiences stands out as a key dimension of UNDP efforts in transforming macro poverty reduction approaches and strategies into actual national and local alternative development paths. The results in this area appear to be mixed. In Ukraine, pilots were sometimes found to be too small to test their viability or to streamline or replicate them as effective solutions to meet the longer-term livelihood challenges of people in the targeted areas. In Belarus, UNDP-supported small and medium-sized enterprises were found to add little value to the local or national economy. Evaluation findings suggest that effective risk management should be a primary concern in areas where external factors strongly influence success or failure, such as in the case of private sector development.

44. Overall, the evaluations of UNCDF local development programmes indicated a high degree of relevance in the type of infrastructure and services delivered through local governments, such as schools, health centres, feeder roads, water and sanitation, and food security-related investments. The relevance of the UNCDF

microfinance portfolio is also demonstrated by evaluation, although results appear to have been mixed. The final evaluation of the UNCDF guichet microfinance programme in West Africa found that the programme had fallen slightly short of its outreach and institutional strengthening targets. A more positive trend, although still mixed, has been revealed by the evaluation of the UNCDF/UNDP MicroStart programme; it was considered a successful microfinance model in the evaluation of the UNDP microfinance portfolio, with good performance of several of the microfinance institutions supported, such as in Yemen. The UNCDF microfinance unit and the technical expertise of its staff were cited in evaluation as a comparative advantage of UNDP programming. Notwithstanding these results, evaluations have identified the broader challenges of inadequate monitoring systems, insufficient documentation of lessons from pilots, and the lack of consistent engagement with national government stakeholders throughout the pilot as constraining the potential for the greater policy impact, replication and sustainability of pilots.

B. Fostering democratic governance

Increasing the efficiency and transparency of state institutions and electoral processes

45. Increasing the efficiency of state institutions and the transparency of public sector management continues to be revealed by evaluations as relevant and challenging areas of engagement for UNDP. In Honduras, for example, through the business centre approach, UNDP has been managing up to 7 per cent of public investment funds with the aim of enhancing efficiency and transparency in the management of large bidding and procurement processes. UNDP has gained the trust of decision makers and, therefore, space for advocacy. UNDP advocacy with the Ministry of Defence for increasing accountability of military expenditure to civil authorities has resulted in an internal audit of the military pension fund. While recognizing these achievements, the evaluation in Honduras warns of the risk that the business centre could become an efficient service provider that does not effectively contribute to national capacity development and institutional strengthening. The evaluation suggests developing a capacity-building plan so as to ensure that in the procurement management processes UNDP transfers skills and, to the extent possible, aligns with national procedures, while having a clear exit strategy.

46. Evaluations reveal UNDP contributions to the efficiency and transparency of electoral processes. In Yemen, the Supreme Commission for Elections and Referenda has become a stronger organization, setting up offices in the governorates. Electoral assistance in 2003 proved successful in increasing voter registration, getting women out to vote, and preventing voter-related violence.

Raising awareness on human rights

47. UNDP utilizes its comparative advantage of neutrality in defending human rights, supporting political reform and advocating policies that promote human development. The ADR in Yemen revealed the relevance of UNDP advocacy efforts, highlighting the fact that the Ministry for Human Rights was producing an annual report on the human rights situation in the country was also been able to take punitive measures on major human rights violations. In Ukraine, government capacity to monitor and act on human rights abuses was strengthened by: improving the human rights monitoring capabilities of the Ombudsman's Office; involving the public in human rights monitoring; improving access to information; and harmonizing the Government's human rights monitoring approach with

United Nations reporting processes. In South Asia, the UNHCR programme on preventing trafficking in women and children has contributed to raising community awareness of issues related to domestic and civil violence against women and children, and of the economic exploitation of indigenous people.

Supporting decentralization processes and enhancing citizens' participation

48. Evaluations reveal that the comparative advantage of UNDP as a neutral broker can be effective in rearticulating state-society relations. This takes place mainly in the framework of decentralization processes, through the development and consolidation of participatory mechanisms and skills. In Bhutan, Benin, Honduras and Mali, evaluations have pointed to the significant role played by UNDP and UNCDF in advancing the policy debate and operationalizing decentralization reforms. The UNDP civil society programme in Guatemala has been evaluated as successful in contributing to the incorporation of citizen participation in community- and municipal-level decision-making. Moreover, civil society organizations supported by UNDP over the past five years are now regularly monitoring state budget execution, with a particular focus on the relation between military expenditure and social investment.

Increasing UNDP performance in democratic governance

49. In spite of the positive contribution to democratic governance, a recurrent finding of the evaluations reviewed was that the impact of UNDP performance could be increased by optimizing synergies through clearer strategic and operational linkages among regional, national and local levels and across thematic areas of intervention. Moreover, as the Ukraine ADR reveals, UNDP initiatives at the country level could benefit from focusing on dimensions of governance that are not typical areas of engagement for UNDP, such as media freedom, the government role in various spheres of economic activity, and institutional incentives.

C. Energy and environment for sustainable development

50. Energy and environment outcome evaluations, as well as evaluations of GEF-funded projects, point to the comparative advantage of UNDP in mainstreaming energy and the environment into policy development and governance. Yet there are challenges in the mainstreaming process and in translating the policy dialogue into implementation and capacity at the local level.

51. The evaluation of the environmental management programme of Indonesia notes mixed progress in each sub-sector of the programme. Environmental degradation continues at an alarming rate. Overall environmental management capacity to respond to these issues has deteriorated, or at best remained stable. The evaluation recommends going beyond efforts to enhance the policy and legal framework in all ministries to enhancing capacity at the provincial and district levels, where the need is greatest. The evaluation recommends that the implementing agency (the environmental unit) should adopt a more programmatic approach – a key element of which would be the development and implementation of a strategic plan. This should include an evaluation and monitoring framework with schedules and processes for undertaking baseline assessments and establishing outcome indicators for each priority sub-sector.

52. The national environmental action programme of Turkmenistan serves as an example where the political leadership of a country refused to accept recommendations requiring structural change in the management of the economy in general, and of agricultural irrigation in particular. The evaluation highlights the fact

that the design of the environmental management programme in the country was too 'ambitious' to contribute to major policy and legal reforms pertaining to environmental issues.

D. Crisis prevention and recovery

53. The increased concern of the international community over crisis prevention and recovery has resulted in the growing engagement of UNDP in post-conflict rehabilitation. This is a field in which the comparative advantage of UNDP as a neutral broker and a reliable partner of the Government and civil society is most important. The polarization of State-society relations that frequently characterizes post-conflict situations entails the latent risk of reopening violent confrontations. In Guatemala, for example, evaluation revealed that UNDP effectiveness in empowering civil society has challenged its positioning as a neutral broker. The ADR in Ukraine revealed important progress in inter-ethnic understanding and social harmony, through UNDP-supported dialogue processes and community based socio-economic activities. However, it also highlighted the need to address emerging threats to human security.

54. Other contributions to conflict resolution are found in Eastern and Central Africa. Examples include the UNIFEM-supported community dialogues between women from Northern and Southern Sudan, and the formation of a women's clan in Somalia, to ensure that women's voice would be heard during the peace talks. Support to NGOs in Rwanda has built women's capacities to play an effective role in the Gacaca, the traditional social justice system. At the regional level, UNIFEM supported the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in developing and implementing a policy on women, conflict resolution and peace building.

55. The evaluation found that the Afghanistan 'New Beginnings' programme had no overall reintegration vision or strategy. Unless immediate remedial action is taken, there is a possibility that any organizational capacity built by the programme could be lost. The most evident shortcoming of the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration component of the programme has been the absence of a strategy for institutional development of organizations of Afghan civil society.

56. In mine action, the national programme launched by Yemen has achieved some success in awareness creation: about 20 per cent of the critically-mined areas have been cleared thus far. Indeed, the mine action programme in Yemen is showing a depth of maturity that is comparable to the best mine action programmes in the world. Since the establishment of the Yemeni Executive Mine Action Centre in 1999, the programme's achievements reveal focus and clarity of purpose. Under capable management, the centre has established impressive mine risk education and victim assistance programmes that could serve as examples for post-conflict situations. In addition, there is a promising mine detection programme using dogs. The national mine action standards have been translated into Arabic, and a comprehensive set of standard operating procedures has been produced, including for quality assurance and monitoring.

E. Responding to HIV/AIDS

57. In the area of HIV/AIDS, UNDP has provided assistance to programme countries through a variety of services. One key conclusion of the evaluation of the role and contribution of UNDP in HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa and Ethiopia is that UNDP should accord greater urgency and prominence to HIV/AIDS in its work at the country level, with clearly integrated country-level strategies and activities and

increasingly strategic use of limited UNDP resources. From 2003-2004, the last year of the review period, the findings show that the share of UNDP spending for HIV/AIDS increased in only four countries, and declined in six. Nevertheless, UNDP appears to have been effective in moving the HIV/AIDS paradigm from a biomedical to a developmental perspective. That shift was part of a global change, but UNDP was considered by many to have been instrumental in successfully advocating for this paradigm shift within countries. However, little progress has been made in mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into all aspects of poverty reduction strategies. There seems to be a 'delivery gap' in translating governance contributions into actions that mitigate and eventually reduce the impact and incidence of the pandemic.

58. Evaluations of the UNDP response to HIV/AIDS in Russia and Viet Nam outline a somewhat more positive scenario. They conclude that through programmatic interventions and 'soft' assistance, such as policy dialogue, advocacy, and coordination, there have been major improvements in the capacity of the authorities to respond to the challenge of confronting the epidemic.

59. Finally, the Indian railways initiative of UNIFEM has reached 30,000 employees of the railway system, 120,000 community members, and 793 people living with HIV/AIDS. It has provided a model for public sector intervention on HIV/AIDS integrating prevention, care, and support services, with progress made in terms of increased awareness and gender sensitivity; increased numbers of people accessing services; and improved working conditions. Following a study tour by a delegation of the Chinese Railways to the project in Andhra Pradesh, China was considering replicating the project for its own railway system.

F. Mainstreaming gender equality

60. Over the past decade, a series of policies on gender mainstreaming has been formulated. Positive measures in support of gender mainstreaming included the continuation of a gender unit at headquarters; the appointment of regional gender advisers; the establishment of a system of gender focal points; and the establishment of trust funds. However, the evaluation of gender mainstreaming in UNDP revealed that these measures were not accompanied by strategies, targets and time frames, or by sufficient operational measures and resources to facilitate and track implementation. UNDP developed a corporate gender strategy and action plan only recently.

61. Findings from 14 country studies revealed uneven practice. In UNDP country offices, approaches have varied considerably, ranging from women-focused projects that, for example, provide credit to women or promote their participation, to incorporating gender analysis and gender concerns in programmes, such as those related to the legal system. In general, the tendency has been to support women-focused activities that complement ongoing work rather than engaging in analyses that deepen UNDP understanding of gender issues and stimulate new approaches. There have been a number of commendable efforts to mainstream gender in the five UNDP thematic areas and in specific regional and country programmes. But these tend to be isolated successes, depending on individual interest and efforts rather than on a systematic approach.

62. The evaluation concludes that gender mainstreaming has not been visible and explicit. Implementation has suffered from confusion about what gender mainstreaming means and how to apply the approach. Inadequacies in leadership, commitment and financial resources, among other issues, have limited the ability to

fully realize the integration of gender equality considerations at all levels of the organization and in all activities.

63. One factor contributing to this lack of success is that the broader corporate priority to restructure the organization – a process begun in 2000 – overshadowed official statements from top management that gender mainstreaming remained a core commitment. For instance, the Global Gender Programme for 2000-2004 received only one-fifth of its former budget. The gender unit was situated under the poverty thematic area in the Bureau of Development Policy (BDP). But since poverty is only one of the five UNDP thematic areas of work, the gender unit could not have oversight of all the thematic areas. As of 2004, the gender unit reports directly to the Director of BDP. Nevertheless, it still lacks sufficient funding and staffing, and has no UNDP-wide authority.

III. Organizational lessons

A. Doing the right things: relevance, positioning, comparative advantage and sustainability

64. The comparative advantage of UNDP lies in its brokering role in starting up or catalyzing development processes, facilitating dialogue as a neutral agent, and contributing to the momentum for policy change. The ADRs in Honduras, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen; the evaluation of the Regional Cooperation Framework for the Arab States; and the strategic evaluations on gender and HIV/AIDS; all highlight UNDP effectiveness in placing human development and the MDGs on the political agenda of partner countries, even in contexts where external involvement can be controversial.

65. Lessons from several countries indicated that to be influential in sensitive areas, UNDP must earn trust and respect across the spectrum of national stakeholders. In Syria, the evaluation found that in the face of a nascent civil society and a cautious official attitude, UNDP did not optimally utilize an opportunity to promote this sector through partnerships with emerging NGOs. In other contexts where relationships between the State and society are highly polarized – such as in post conflict environments – UNDP effectiveness in empowering civil society through technical and financial support may challenge its position as a trustworthy Government partner. Evaluations have highlighted that this must be identified and constantly factored in through risk management, to avoid the latent risk of the loss of credibility that would limit possibilities for policy advocacy and partnership for human development.

66. These risks should be considered within the wider framework of UNDP resource mobilization strategies and the financial sustainability of operations units, particularly in non-core environments, where Governments are key financial partners. The evaluations highlighted two cases that provided interesting lessons that may be relevant in other contexts. The first case is that of Honduras, where strong UNDP engagement in providing administrative services to the Government for public finance management led to several positive effects. UNDP efficiency and transparency in administration provided added value to Government fundraising and management strategies. UNDP gained the trust of decision-makers, opening the way for advocacy and political engagement nationwide. The cost recovery for these services has supported the financial sustainability of the country office, allowing for an increase in the number of staff and, potentially, a wider scope for its

interventions. However, the lack of a clear exit strategy and of a systematic approach to national capacity development raises the question of whether a sustained increase in delivery might become an objective per se, which could shift the focus from the development agenda of the country or reduce programme quality. In the second case, Ukraine, the UNDP resource mobilization strategy has focused mainly on cost-sharing with bilateral donors, resulting in a dramatic increase in programme expenditure. Nevertheless, the evaluation reveals that efforts to mobilize funds are not necessarily the best way to increase the relevance, efficacy or impact of the UNDP portfolio.

67. Conflict of interest and confusion of roles may arise where UNDP seeks to combine the roles of policy coordinator, donor, rights advocate, neutral broker and project implementer. In particular, areas where UNDP has a comparative advantage but is unlikely to mobilize external resources – such as donor coordination, neutral broker activities and advocacy for human rights – can be crowded out by activities for which cost-sharing assistance is more readily available and government consent easier to secure. In short, the relationship between resource mobilization, budget delivery and the relevance, scope and effectiveness of interventions for development change should always be carefully analysed.

B. Doing things right: efficiency and effectiveness

68. While there have been significant achievements in fostering debate on key developmental issues and contributing to momentum for policy change, UNDP's performance in the implementation of programmes and the piloting of concrete practical experiences has been mixed.

69. While recognizing the difficulty of establishing effective programmatic or policy micro-macro linkages, there are strong indications that UNDP is more effective when its comparative advantages in resource and knowledge mobilization and policy dialogue are complemented by better programme coordination and monitoring. These findings confirm that UNDP needs to move from a mainly project-based approach towards a *modus operandi* that addresses broad development issues at the local, national or regional level. Visions and strategies that link these different levels, as well as management capacity for effective coordination that optimizes potential synergies, are key factors for success.

70. The potential for enhancing strategic management and focus through the results-based management system of UNDP is still not being fully exploited. Discrepancies are observed between what is formally stated in programme documents and what is actually being done. Several UNDP country-level evaluations have shown that the way in which strategic results are formulated in programme documents do not always constitute useful planning tools for setting priorities, defining programmes strategically, or cultivating partnerships with the clear objective of contributing to the delivery of agreed results. However, these evaluations – notably Ukraine – also revealed that responsiveness to Government and adaptability to change are critical for achieving results.

71. These findings suggest that staff capacity for clear and focused programming needs to be developed further, while monitoring systems that adopt the country programme as their unit of analysis need to be established, going beyond individual project- and sector-focused programmes. Flexible management procedures that allow for strategic changes during implementation so as to optimize opportunities, while safeguarding transparency and accountability, are other key factors for greater impact. In summary, evaluations point to several opportunities to maximise UNDP

effectiveness by reinforcing results-orientated approach, enhancing management capacity and improving planning, monitoring and evaluation.

IV. **Proposed Evaluation Office programme of work, 2006-2007**

72. The Evaluation Office has prepared a rolling two-year programme of work on strategic and programmatic evaluations. The programme includes work on quality assurance of the evaluation function and practice.

73. The proposal for strategic evaluations is based on the following criteria: corporate priorities evidenced from investment patterns; outcomes reported; and policy statements of the Administrator and the Associate Administrator; emerging organizational practices and development priorities; issues emerging from past evaluations; programme areas not covered by recent evaluations; and consultations at the working level with headquarters units. The proposal for programmatic evaluations is based on evaluations mandated by the Executive Board and strategic country coverage through ADRs.

74. The UNDP biennium budget allocated a total of \$5.0 million to the Evaluation Office for 2006-2007. Based on the discussion of the evaluation policy among senior management, and with a view to expanding the coverage of evaluation work, an additional \$1.5 million in programme funding was approved for the Evaluation Office for 2006. Total resources from the UNDP core budget for programming for 2006-2007 thus amount to \$6.5 million. Additional funding, from partnership agreements – with the United Kingdom Department for International Development and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation – amounts to \$1.2 million for 2006.

75. The *ongoing* programme of work is as follows:

(a) Strategic evaluations:

- (i) Development effectiveness report on national ownership;
- (ii) Evaluation of the UNDP role and contribution in post-conflict countries;
- (iii) Assessment of national human development reports;
- (iv) Joint evaluation of impact of the international tsunami response (both as part of coalition and co-manager of thematic evaluation on local and national capacities).

(b) Programmatic evaluations:

- (i) Country Evaluations – ADRs in 2006: Bhutan, Colombia, Jordan, Lao PDR, Nicaragua, Rwanda, Serbia and Montenegro, and a cluster evaluation of Regional Bureau for Arab States net contributor countries.

- (ii) Joint evaluation of GEF activity cycle and modalities;

76. The *proposed* programme of work 2006-2007 is as follows:

(a) Strategic evaluations:

- (i) Evaluation of results based management in UNDP;

(ii) Evaluation of mainstreaming energy and environment into governance and poverty reduction;

(iii) Evaluation of UNDP engagement with new international cooperation modalities;

(iv) Joint Evaluation of UNDP-UNIDO partnership (requested by the UNIDO Board).

(b) Programmatic evaluations:

(i) South-South Cooperation Programme;

(ii) Evaluation of the regional cooperation framework (RCF) in Africa;

(iii) Evaluation of the RCF in Asia and the Pacific;

(iv) Evaluation of the RCF in Latin America and the Caribbean;

(v) Eight ADRs in 2007 (to be identified);

(vi) Country-level evaluations in collaboration with UNEG, including the Republic of South Africa and two other countries.

77. Quality enhancement of the evaluation function and practice: standard-setting and quality assurance system development; guidelines, operational procedures, tool kits; dissemination and outreach; reports and knowledge products.

78. The annex provides evaluation statistics in tabular and graphic form.

Annex. Evaluation statistics

Table 1. Evaluations at a glance, 2005

Type of evaluation	Units				Total
	UNDP	UNCDF	UNIFEM	UNV	
Strategic evaluation					
Evaluations conducted by UNDP Evaluation Office and the evaluation units of associated funds and programmes	2	0	5	0	7
Evaluations managed by units responsible for programmes	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	2	0	5	0	7
Programmatic evaluation					
Evaluations conducted by UNDP Evaluation Office and the evaluation units of associated funds and programmes	5	0	0	0	5
Evaluations managed by units responsible for programmes	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	5	0	0	0	5
Outcome evaluation					
Evaluations conducted by UNDP Evaluation Office and the evaluation units of associated funds and programmes	0	0	1	0	1
Evaluations managed by units responsible for programmes	68	0	0	0	68
Subtotal	68	0	1	0	69
Project evaluation					
Evaluations conducted by UNDP Evaluation Office and the evaluation units of associated funds and programmes	0	7	2	6	15
Evaluations managed by units responsible for programmes	204*	0	0	0	204
Subtotal	204	7	2	6	219
Total	279	7	8	6	300

* This includes one evaluation conducted by a GEF regional office.

Table 2. Outcome evaluation compliance 2005

Region	No. of countries subject to compliance*	Level of compliance		
		Full**	Partial***	None****
Africa		1	0	3
Subtotal	4	1	0	3
Asia / Pacific		1	3	1
Subtotal	5	1	3	1
Europe/CIS		3	1	0
Subtotal	4	3	1	0
Total	13 (100%)	5 (38%)	4 (31%)	4 (31%)

* Finalizing their programming cycle in 2005. There was no country subject to compliance in the Arab States region or the Latin America and the Caribbean region in 2005.

** Fully compliant with the expected number of outcome evaluations, according to the size of the programme.

*** At least one outcome evaluation conducted during the cycle.

**** No outcome evaluation conducted during the cycle.

Table 3. Decentralized evaluations per region and average number of evaluations per country that conducted at least one evaluation

Region	No. of countries	No. of evaluations per region	No. of countries conducted at least one evaluation	% of countries in the region conducted at least one evaluation	Average no. of evaluations (per country that conducted at least one)
Africa	45	64	23	51%	2.8
Arab States	18	30	11	61%	2.7
Asia and the Pacific	25	76	19	76%	4.1
Europe and the CIS	30	50	16	53%	3.1
Latin America and the Caribbean	24	51	16	67%	3.3
All regions	142	271	85	60%	3.2

Table 4. Decentralized evaluations,*by type (2004 and 2005)

	2004		2005	
	No. of evaluations	% of evaluations (of total evaluations)	No. of evaluations	% of evaluations (of total evaluations)
Outcome evaluations	35	14%	68	25%
Project evaluations	225	86%	203	75%
Total	262	100%	271	100%

*Outcome and project evaluations only, as managed by UNDP country offices

Figure 1. Decentralized outcome evaluations, by theme 2004 and 2005

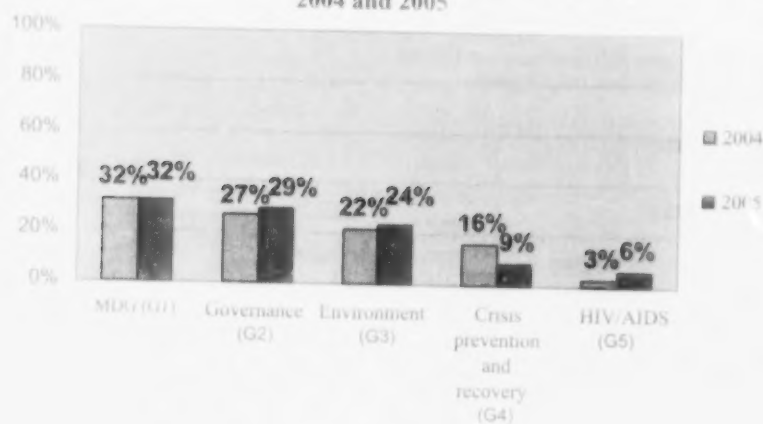


Table 5: Decentralized outcome evaluation, by theme (2004 and 2005)

Theme	2004		2005	
	No. of evaluations by theme	% of evaluations, by theme	No. of evaluations, by theme	% of evaluations, by theme
MDG (G1)	12	32%	22	32%
Governance (G2)	10	27%	20	29%
Environment (G3)	8	22%	16	24%
Crisis Prevention and Recovery (G4)	6	16%	6	9%
HIV/AIDS (G5)	1	3%	4	6%
Total	37	100%	68	100%

Table 6: Decentralized outcome evaluations per region

Region	No. of countries	No. of outcome evaluation per region	No. of countries that conducted at least one outcome evaluation	% of countries that conducted at least one outcome evaluation
Africa	45	16	7	16%
Arab States	18	6	5	28%
Asia / Pacific	25	13	6	24%
Europe / CIS	30	19	12	40%
Latin America and the Caribbean	24	14	7	29%
All Regions	142	68	37	26%

Figure 2: Percentage of country offices that conducted at least one outcome evaluation per region

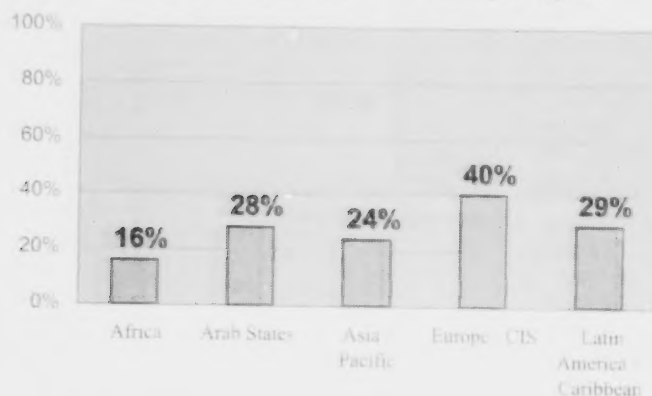


Table 7. Decentralized evaluations* by type, per region

Region	No. of countries	No. of outcome evaluations	No. of project evaluations	Total no. of evaluations
Africa	45	16	49	65
Arab States	18	6	23	29
Asia / Pacific	25	13	63	77
Europe / CIS	30	19	31	50
Latin America Caribbean	24	14	37	52
Total	142	68	203	271

*Outcome and project evaluations only, as managed by UNDP country offices.

Figure 3. Percentage of outcome and project evaluations in total decentralized evaluations per region

